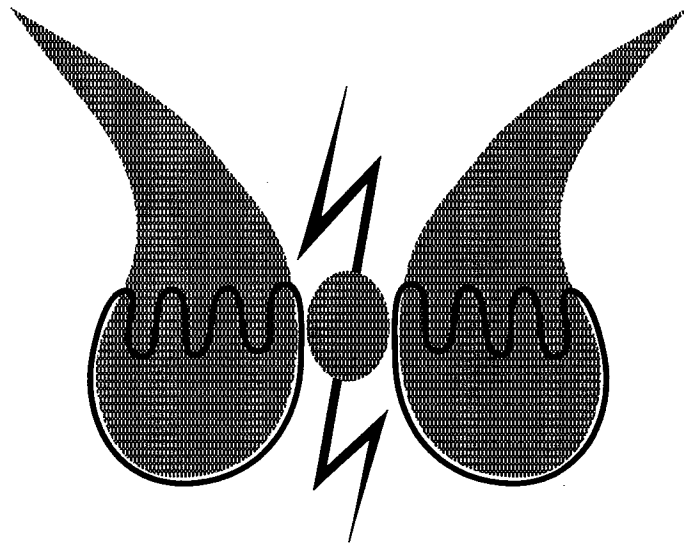


# Royal Australian Navy Radio Mechanics



**A History of the *Torrens* Era**

George Stevens

# ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY RADIO MECHANICS

## THE TORRENS ERA - 1945 - 1949

### A HISTORY

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## FOREWORD & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

An idle thought of "I wonder what ever happened to so and so", was the innocent start of this book. This led me to wondering about others. Out of curiosity, I then sat with pen and paper to recall the names of the R.A.N. Radio and Radar Mechanics (RM's) with whom I had trained, worked and played almost 45 years previously. I remembered the names of quite a few, and prepared a list which I gave to Gerry York. He and Hilary O'Connell added to it. Between the three of us we came up with 47 names. Pretty good considering how long it was since we had been in contact, and also that there were probably a total of 120 of these men.

In this process of discovery it hit me that because a number had since died, before we all handed in our buckets and spades to the big sand castle builder in the sky, some record of our various and collective contributions to Australian Naval folklore should be published for posterity. After some months of thinking about this, I woke up one morning in June 1991, and decided that as no one else was going to do it, I might as well have a go.

I had all but lost contact with every one of them, bar two, and after searching the Sydney telephone directory, managed to get 8 addresses. Letters were written to these eight. From that point the list of contact addresses slowly grew. Then after a couple of months the process slowed to a literal crawl.

Discussing with my wife Shirley alternative tactics to improve the contact rate, she suggested that Ian McNamara, host of the ABC Sunday program "Australia All Over", might give me a 10 second commercial. So I wrote to Macca. Three days later he phoned me, we talked briefly, and the upshot was that he interviewed me live on his program for 13 minutes the following Sunday morning at 7.20 am. I thought that at that early hour, I might get one or two contacts. How wrong! The home phone started ringing at 7.35 while I was still in the ABC studio, and during the day there were 18 phone calls from South Australia, Victoria, the back blocks as well as the metropolitan area of NSW, Canberra and Queensland. One chap phoned me from his car phone somewhere west of Geelong. Calls continued coming in, a few each day for the next two weeks, and the mail that was generated kept our Postie busy for months. This was the kick my project needed. From that point the list of names grew to just over 230 (my initial list of 47 was far from "pretty good"), and the contact addresses grew steadily each week.

In the process of making contact, it became apparent that there was a strong desire for a Reunion. That is a separate story to be told elsewhere. It also became apparent that while my initial focus was on those who went through Torrens, there was a strong tide of interest from the Torrens predecessors, the HO RM's, and the Torrens successors, the FND REM's. Some reference will be made to both these groups in this history, but chronicles of these eras await to be written by others.

There is no question that without the generous contribution of material from many, most, of the ex RM's and respective families, the enthusiastic practical support from my wife Shirley and son Matthew, and the co-operation of Ms E Carey of the Australian Archives, this book would never have eventuated. To all who provided photographs, copies of documents, anecdotes and most importantly encouragement, I will be forever grateful.

It should be understood that this history is not intended to represent in any way an

"official" history of the "Torrens Terrors", nor is it intended to be a publication of any literary merit. It is however an attempt to capture some of the flavour of life in the mid 40's at Birkenhead, the School of Mines and other Adelaide locations, and to present this summary to the many who created it as a reminder of past good times.in

I hope that the combined efforts that have resulted in this book will bring back pleasurable memories to these ex RM's. I also hope it will be of more than passing interest to their families, because collectively these men made a distinct and unique contribution to the development of Australian communication, television, electronic and other enterprises from the immediate post war years through to the end of the 1980's. The families of these men can be justly proud of them. Those surviving are all now in their mid to late sixties, and it is to them and the memory of their late mates that this book is dedicated.

George Stevens,  
Greenwich NSW  
November 1992.

## INTRODUCTION

In early 1945, the Royal Australian Navy recognised that with the imminent cessation of hostilities, most of the Hostility Only (HO's) sailors would be discharged from the service, potentially leaving essential services unmanned. To address this eventuality, a recruiting program of 12 years continuous service was introduced later in 1945 for all branches of the Service. This carried on for a number of years thereafter.

A schedule of Radio Mechanics necessary to man the estimated post war Navy, dated 13th August 1945, showed how critical the situation was deemed to be with an estimate of just 5 serving members only who would transfer to the permanent forces, leaving a shortage of 152. The schedule indicated that 101 of those 157 RM's would be destined to serve in the 54 naval vessels in commission at the time, 33 would serve in shore establishments and there would be a "pool" of 14.

The program called for a selective recruitment to achieve 15 classes at the rate of 8 classes per year. Class duration was to be 39 weeks. The total course duration became 49 weeks, and there were in fact 15 classes, not counting the one RNZN class.

The initial training comprised 3 phases. Firstly there were 6 weeks Entry Level Training at Flinders Naval Depot (ELT at FND), precisely the same as for all new recruits. During this period the recruits were taught the essentials of Naval life such as squad drill, how to dress and behave as one of HM's Senior Service personnel, and basics such as the difference between officers and others. The time honoured homily of "If it moves, salute it. If it doesn't move, polish it. If it won't take polish, paint it.", became crystal clear to all recruits during this period. Upon arrival, each recruit was reduced to the lowest common denominator by having all his hair cut to the scalp, by being given a number, and by being dubbed "Macca". (No connection with Ian "Macca" McNamara).

The second phase took place in Adelaide South Australia. Accommodation was provided at the Naval depot HMAS Torrens at Port Adelaide. Instruction in electrical and radio theory and practice was given for five days a week over 6 months at the Adelaide School of Mines, now part of the University of South Australia. A copy of the course syllabus, included in this book, shows 816 hours of study over 24 weeks. It was in Adelaide that the real friendships were formed. Torrens and the School of Mines were also identified as the joint alma mater. For these young men, this is where it all really began.

The third phase was advanced instruction in either wireless telegraphy or radar equipment installed in HM ships. From Class #4 the even numbered classes were selected for W/T training, and the odd numbered classes studied radar. At the conclusion of this phase, the RM's were considered capable of assuming full maintenance responsibilities in their respective specialty. The syllabus for this phase shows 608 hours of instruction over 19 weeks.

At a later stage, let's call it phase 4, conversion training was provided such that qualified RM's were trained to service both W/T and radar. Odd numbered classes were cross trained to service W/T equipment, and even numbered classes cross trained to service radar. This required a further 500 hours of instruction over a 4 month period. With the formation of the Fleet Air Arm in 1948, 30 RM's were selected in early 1949 to

be trained in HMS Ariel Lancashire UK for approximately 12 months in airborne and associated equipment.

This book addresses itself to all of the above, but the focus is on the Torrens era. The contents are a combination of hard fact, for credibility, and blatant folklore, to make it of interest to its readers. To put this historical record into chronological perspective, page 4 shows that the Torrens experience was really the fourth of six "waves" of R.A.N. Electronics Technicians, to use a generic phrase. The first wave were the pre World War 2 Telegraphists who operated and maintained wireless telegraphy equipment. In 1942 a new branch of Wireless Mechanic was formed. Selected Telegraphists were transferred to the new branch, and a recruitment program was implemented. This was the second wave.

In 1943 the Radio Mechanic title was introduced, and recruits from civilian life entered the Navy to be trained at the (then) Melbourne Technical School. Some of these were Don Crowley, later an instructor at the Adelaide School of Mines, George Neale, George Cowie, Gordon Frost, Les Kendal, Tom O'Sullivan. These were the start of the third wave.

1945 saw the first of the 12 year permanents recruited as the fourth wave. There were ultimately about 230 of these youngsters who were billeted at HMAS Torrens, Birkenhead South Australia, and trained at the Adelaide School of Mines. It is this group that is the focus of this history.

In 1948 the Radio Mechanic branch was disbanded, and all RM's were absorbed into the newly formed Electrical branch. Training at Adelaide ceased and was then carried out at the "L" School Flinders Naval Depot in Victoria. From this point the RM's became Radio Electricians, and the fifth wave of Radio Electricians Mates recruitment and training commenced. In 1962, a reorganisation saw the creation of the Electronic Technical (ET) Branch. Of the four categories created, two namely ETC, Electronic Technical Communications and ETS, Electronic Technical Systems became the modern RM's. All a far cry from the Wireless Mechanic a quarter of a century previously. These were the sixth wave. At the time of writing this history, it seems that a seventh wave is being considered. And if one is superstitious, mythology has it that the seventh wave is the big one.

As indicated above, the focus of this history is on the fourth wave, thus there is still plenty of scope for other budding historians to pick up a pen, or word processor, and create histories of those who were the predecessors and the successors of the Torrens mob.

Throughout this book, jargon of the era has been used extensively. There is a glossary of terms provided to help the uninitiated comprehend.

As with most historical records, there will be perceived inaccuracies, omissions and inappropriate entries in this record, despite my best endeavours to avoid such irritants. Should I thus innocently offend any ex RM or other reader, I offer my apologies in advance.

## EVOLUTION OF THE RADIO MECHANIC.

For ease of comprehension, the essentials of this chapter have been condensed to a one page "*Potted History Pre 1942 through 1949*" on page 4.

In the pre World War 2 days, and in the early part of that war, maintenance of Royal Australian Naval Wireless Telegraphy equipment was the responsibility of the equipment's users, the Telegraphists. These were the first "wave" of RM's.

As the equipment became more complex requiring different skills, and as the Telegraphist's work became more demanding, there was clearly a need to split the maintenance from the operational responsibilities. Consequently, in 1942 a new branch of Wireless Mechanic was adopted by the R.A.N. CNO 194/1942 stated that "*there was to be a mandatory transfer of some Telegraphists to the newly created position of Wireless Mechanic, coincident with a HO recruitment program*". This was the second "wave" of RM's.

In 1943 (CNO 414/1943), the Radio Mechanic Branch was created in the R.A.N. To meet immediate needs, there were 3 categories, but the intention was that all categories would eventually be capable of maintaining all W/T and Radar equipment. RM (R) were made responsible for Radar equipment general service. RM (W) were part Radar, part W/T general service. RM (S) were W/T equipment in Stations ashore. It is interesting to note the qualifications required. These were age between 18 and 30 years; Intermediate Certificate but Leaving Physics and Mathematics or Technical School equivalent preferred; some knowledge of electrics desirable but not essential; and preference to be given to those with practical radio experience. The training courses required attendance at the Royal Melbourne Technical College as it was then known, 24 weeks for (W) and 22 weeks for (S); attendance at the FND Signal School, 4 weeks for (W) and 2 weeks for (S). Subsequently, the (W)'s spent 12 weeks at the Radar School Sydney and the (s)'s spent 4 weeks at Harman and Belconnen. The CNO states that "*RM's will wear Class III uniform with the W/T badge as for Ordinary Telegraphists, and they will use the Artisans' mess*". Thus commenced the third wave. 1945 saw a modification to the order of things. CNO 500/45 stated that all categories were required to convert to RM (C). The (C) meant combined. More of this shortly.

Up to this time, all RM's were Hostilities Only (HO), ie in for the duration of the war only. It was at this stage with the war coming to an end that the Naval Board recognised the potential situation of having too few trained personnel, and took steps to create a long term recruitment and training program of replacement of the HO personnel about to be discharged. Shortly after, in late 1945, the first class of 12 year permanents, Class 1 as it later became known, was recruited. 15 Australian classes comprising 230 recruits were taken on and put into the Torrens/School of Mines system, the last class leaving Adelaide in April 1949. These were the fourth wave of RM's.

In the last quarter of 1945 there was some spirited correspondence between various officers such as the First and Second Naval Member, the DTSR and others about the preferred age range of Recruit RM's, and the rates of pay. It was generally felt that an age span of 17 and 1/2 to 18 years was desirable, with specially suitable candidates to 19 years being considered. This was quite selective considering the desirable age range only

two years prior in 1943. Rate of pay for qualified RM's was to be 9 shillings and 3 pence per day plus deferred pay and allowances. For the Leading rate it was to be 10 shillings and 10 pence per day plus allowances. The maximum possible for CPO with 6 years seniority was to be 15 shillings per day plus allowances. However, for the under 18 years of age ODRM, the princely sum of 3 shillings and 6 pence per day, plus allowances, was paid. Mind you, that was for a 7 day, not 5 day, week.

On 23 March 1946, the CO Watson, Commander McKinnon, wrote to F.O.I.C. Sydney expressing concern that the creation of an RM (C) from Direct Entry (CNO Part IV) was impractical *"...and that too much is being asked of the ratings concerned"*. He added *"...it is considered most doubtful whether even Senior ratings, with the advantage of years of experience ... could assimilate and retain sufficient knowledge to make them proficient technicians on all forms of Radio equipment."*

CNO 300/46 dated 8th October 1946 changed conditions again with the abolition of Radio Mechanic (C) category. This Order also stated *"Pending the institution of the Electrical Branch, in which all Radio Mechanics will be absorbed, the rates of pay at present prescribed in Naval Financial Regulations and Instructions for Radio Mechanics will remain in force"*.

On 17th January 1947, the Secretary of the Naval Board wrote to the Commanding Officer HMAS Watson stating *"I am directed by the Naval Board to inform you that it is under consideration to adopt the provisions of Admiralty General Message 154A concerning the conditions of service of Radio Mechanics. I am to request that your remarks and recommendations be forwarded together with proposed amendments to CNO 300 of 1946"*. This in essence proposed a change in the employment conditions which on the 4th February 1947 in the view of the Commanding Officer HMAS Watson *"... would amount to a misrepresentation of the terms of enlistment, and be harmful to the morale of the Branch"*.

The tide for change however was strong. On 17th March 1947 DTSR decreed that *"... as all Radio Mechanics will be transferred to the proposed Electrical Branch ... being provided with Class II uniforms ... remain in class II uniform until confirmed in Petty Officer rating."*

Then followed CNO 246/47 dated 19th August 1947. This was announced as *"This reprint of Navy Order 300 of 1946 has been produced to correct certain anomalies in the original Order and is intended to cover the period until Radio Mechanics are transferred to the Electrical Branch under the conditions laid down in Navy Order 149 of 1947. The two Orders should be read in close conjunction."*

At this stage there were 5 categories of RM's as follows: (R) - General Service Radar Equipment. (W/T) - General Service Wireless Equipment, including shore wireless. (WR) - General Service Radar Equipment, with a post graduate qualification in certain general service wireless equipment. (AR) - Air Radar Equipment. (AW) Air Wireless Equipment.

This CNO reconfirmed the employment conditions extant which included advancement to Leading Radio Mechanic on qualifying in their Service Training Examination, and advancement to Acting Petty Officer Radio Mechanic on satisfactory completion of 18



months as Leading Radio Mechanic. Appendix A is a reprint of the Appendix to this CNO and summarises duration of courses for Radio Mechanics at that time.

On the 9th September 1947, the curtain closed on the final act of the Torrens saga with the announcement by signal from ACNB that *"Reference CNO 149/47. entry of Ordinary Seaman (Radio Mechanic) is abolished ..."* Henceforth, recruiting was to be for Recruits LB into the Electrical Branch. All existing RM's were absorbed into the "L" Branch. So ended the RM Branch as such and with it the era of recruitment and training of the fourth wave of RM's.

It has been oft said that as one door closes, another opens. And so it was with the introduction of Radio Electrician's Mates (REM's), the fifth wave, to carry on the tradition being steadily built by their predecessors in the first 4 waves.

(Author's note: As previously stated in the Introduction to this book, treatment of related information about other waves will be left to other chroniclers. There is certainly sufficient material for two or three more histories to be written.)

# EVOLUTION OF THE R.A.N. RADIO MECHANIC

## POTTED HISTORY PRE 1942 THROUGH 1949

YEAR	EVENT
1/42 & Prior	Wireless Telegraphist maintains equipment (1st wave)
	Wireless Mechanic Branch established CNO 194/1942. Direct entries & transfers (2nd wave)
1/43	
	Radio Mechanic Branch formed. CNO 414/1943 RM(R); RM(W); RM(S) (3rd wave)
1/44	
1/45	RM(C) category introduced. Navy Circ 8771 9 May 1945. CNO 500/45. Torrens entry recruiting under CNO 500/45 begins August (4th wave)
1/46	School of Mines first class, Class #1 commences January Abolition of RM(C) (W) & (S). Retention of RM(R). Introduction of RM(WR) & (WT). CNO 300/46. October.
1/47	Class #12, last class under CNO 300/46 & 360/47 commence S of M June Formation of "L" Branch July. Additional categories of RM(AR) & (AW) introduced. CNO 246/47 August. Change of recruitment policy, abolition of ODRM rate. CNO 149/47 September. Class #13, REM, first class under "L" Branch commences October (5th wave)
1/48	
1/49	School of Mines last class, Class #15 finishes April Fleet Air Arm conversion commences HMS Ariel UK May
	The Radio Electrician category continued through for 15 years to 1962 when the name of the Electrical Branch was changed to Electronic Technical (ET) Branch. Most of the Radio Electricians became either Electronic Technical Communications (ETC) or Electronic Technical Systems (ETS). (6th wave)
Author's note:	Taken as part of the whole of 50 years of the (generic) Radio Mechanic history from 1942 through 1992, the three and a half years of Torrens experience was relatively small only. Nevertheless, from its commencement in 1946 the Torrens experience was action packed and was really the genesis and backbone of the post war Radio Mechanic discipline for the next three decades.

## GETTING THE NUMBERS

On 13th August 1945, D.T.S.R. Captain Alan McNicol reported that to effectively man the estimated interim post war Navy, of the 157 required RM's, there were 5 at that time in the Service, potentially leaving a shortage of 152! He further proposed this number be revised to 285.

Intended disposition of these ratings would be 101 in 55 ships afloat, 42 in shore establishments and a "10% pool" to total 157.

On 25th April 1946, eight months later, in consideration of an interim force of 13,500 Naval personnel the CO Watson, Commander Neil McKinnon, proposed a total of 171 RM's to man 36 ships and 11 shore establishments. Of these, he recommended 62 (R), 71(W/T) and 21 (W.R.) To produce these numbers by training he offered two alternatives. One was to double the numbers in Class 4 (due to start at the School of Mines on 3rd June but which actually commenced 1st July), then split on completion of the Adelaide phase of training. After allowing for wastage, this Commander McKinnon estimated would result in 108 trained (R) & (WR) by 30th May 1947, and 90 (W/T) by 25th July 1947. A total of 198. His alternative was to simply proceed with the Adelaide training as planned, and split the numbers at Watson, 50% being trained W/T and 50% being trained Radar.

The former of these two alternatives was adopted, and as a consequence, the commencement of Class #4 was delayed by four weeks to build up the numbers and it became the first W/T class. Thereafter the even numbered classes were nominated (W/T) and the odd numbered classes nominated (R). Class #4 was the largest class to commence. Depending upon which day of the week in early July 1946 one considered that class, the numbers of students ranged from a high of 29 to a low of 22 as men were advanced to earlier classes or deferred to later classes.

For a Post War Navy of 19,000 by 1960 (14 years hence), Commander McKinnon postulated a need of 377 RM's plus a 15% pool of 56 totalling 433 RM's to man 80 ships and 12 shore establishments. Distribution of the 377 would be 159 (R), 110 (W/T), 23 (WR), 16 (AR), 15 (AW), 24 CPO. A naval force of these dimensions did not eventuate however.

While it is not known precisely how these planning numbers actually translated into reality, the author estimates that there were in the vicinity of 180 trained RM's by the time the School of Mines training ceased in mid 1949. Thus Commander McKinnon's crystal gazing of 3 years previously was quite close.

Initially recruitment into the Radio Mechanic Branch was successful. On 10th June 1946 the CO Watson, Commander McKinnon, informed F.O.I.C. Sydney that "... a total of 120 ratings (to 3rd June 1946) has either been entered or selected for entry as Ordinary Seaman (RM)". He went on to say that of these 120, 31 had entered without selection, 74 had been selected and entered, and 15 had been selected but had not yet entered. Also at that date there had been 12 "failures" leaving a net 108.

At that stage, 10th June 1946, Torrens had 13 of Class #1, entered in January; 7 of Class

#2 entered in March plus 2 transfers from Class #1; 22 of Class #3 entered May plus 4 transferred from Class #2; and 21 from Class #4 June entry. Thus total on course at Torrens was then 69. Also there were 24 at FND available for a July entry to become Class #5. Waiting in the wings ready to be introduced to the loving arms of FND's Recruit School were 15 young innocents, due to become the nucleus of the August entry Class #6. The CO Watson observed that 11 of the 31 recruited without pre-selection had failed, while a further 6 had been transferred to later classes for further trial. On this point of lack of performance, Commander McKinnon commented "...*lack of control and discipline outside of working hours is partly responsible for some of the failures*". He went on to criticise severely the management of students "...*supervision of the courses leaves much to be desired. Due to the overlapping of entry of classes and also to the varying periods of each section of the course, examinations for different classes are not held together but occur at fortnightly intervals. Certain class results are thus reviewed up to a fortnight after the examination is held and in the event of ratings failing or having to revert, they are left for two weeks floundering on new work which is beyond them, at the same time missing that part of the course for which revision is necessary*".

Commander McKinnon concluded his message by saying that recruitment was becoming more difficult, and he requested a recruitment advertising campaign to guarantee intake numbers.

The flush of immediate post war patriotic fervour had diminished rapidly by mid 1946, and D.T.S.R. expressed concern on 7th June 1946 that "*The numbers and standard of Radio Mechanics being recruited has fallen off greatly in the last few months. I.N.R. is requested to repeat his advertising campaign*". (Author's note: He could have expressed himself differently with "...*the numbers and standard of those offering for recruitment etc*". After all, he was referring to classes 3 & 4 who weren't THAT bad!")

In response, the Deputy Director of the Advertising Division, Department of the Treasury suggested the following:

- 4      6X2 (6 inch 2 column) adverts in all Metropolitan dailies at a cost of 672 pounds,
- 2      6X2 adverts in certain radio journals at 62 pounds 14 shillings
- 6      1 minute announcements on all metropolitan radio stations at 264 pounds, 10 shillings and 6 pence
- Production costs (say) of 100 pounds 15 shillings and 6 pence

Total 1,100 pounds.

Between August 9 and September 20 1946, newspaper recruitment advertisements were placed in the following newspapers and journals: Sydney Sun, Sydney Telegraph, Sydney Morning Herald, Mirror, Newcastle Herald, Newcastle Sun, A.B.C. Weekly, Adelaide Advertiser, Adelaide News, Radio Call, West Australian, Daily News (WA), Brisbane Courier Mail, Brisbane Telegraph, Melbourne Age, Melbourne herald, Melbourne Sun, Melbourne Argus, Listener-In, Melbourne Amateur Radio, Hobart Mercury, Radio & hobbies and Australia Radio World. On the radio, four 1 minute advertisements were authorised. Price per minute varied from a low of 11 shillings and 7 pence at 6PM WA, to a high of 3 pounds 9 shillings and 5 pence on 2GB-HR in NSW. Total cost for these

four by 1 minute ads on the 23 radio stations was 150 pounds 16 shillings and 8 pence. A bargain - especially considering the quality of recruit who came forward!

The advertising campaign must have been successful because on 18th October 1946, the D.T.S.R. Commander Tom Morrison signalled that "...approval has been given on file 614/217/23 to recruit a total of 12 classes of 20 R/M each. So far 7 have been recruited and the 8th is in the process of selection. D.T.S.R. anticipates that the last class should be recruited by about July 1947 ...". As it transpired, his prediction was a year out, the last class commencing October 1948.

**The**  
**ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY**  
*offers*  
**A CAREER to YOUNG MEN**  
**INTERESTED IN RADIO**

★

Young men interested in radio are required for training and service as Radio Mechanics with the Royal Australian Navy.

**AGES FOR ENTRY**  
17½ to 23 years (special cases, to 25 years) must be of at least INTERMEDIATE TECHNICAL STANDARD EDUCATION. Knowledge of Radio desirable, but NOT essential. A thorough technical training will be given in maintenance of W/T, RADAR, NAVIGATION AIDS, TELEVISION, LORAN and all other ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT.

**TERM OF ENGAGEMENT**  
12 years (if entered under age of 18, the 12 years will commence from 18th. birthday.)

**For Particulars Apply To :**  
*The Naval Recruiting Officer,*

NV 2 '62 86

# SCHOOL OF MINES CLASS SCHEDULES

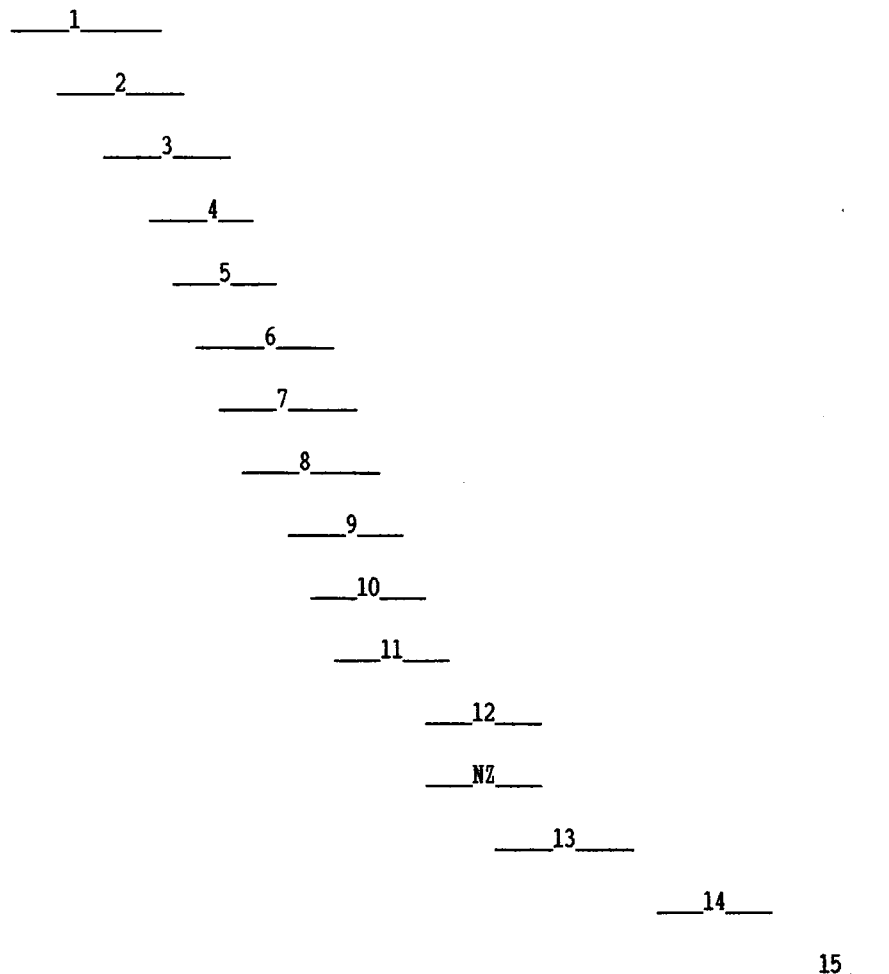
1946

1947

1948

1949

J F M A M J J A S O N D J F M A M J J A S O N D J F M A M J J A S O N D J F M A



CLASS	START	FINISH	CLASS	START	FINISH
1	12/01/46	09/07/46	9	05/01/47	??/06/47
2	??/03/46	??/08/46	10	23/02/47	16/07/47
3	??/05/46	??/10/46	11	01/03/47	15/08/47
4	01/07/46	17/11/46	12	30/06/47	12/03/48
5	02/08/46	20/12/46	NZ	??/07/47	25/03/48
6	??/09/46	??/03/47	13	13/10/47	21/05/48
7	12/10/46	11/04/47	14	??/05/48	??/10/48
8	??/11/46	??/05/47	15	??/10/48	??/04/49

NOTE 1: Navy office records have it that class 12 above was class 14, and class 13 above was class 15. It is not known how nor when these anomalies in class numbering came about.

NOTE 2: NZ above means that a class of RNZN RM's went through Torrens.

## NAMES & CLASS NUMBERS

Surprisingly, even after literally hundreds of hours of search, research and verification, there are likely to be a number of discrepancies in some of the data in this chapter.

The names listed of those who commenced at Torrens is probably 99% accurate. There is much corroborative evidence that 230 RM's were drafted to Torrens to commence training at the Adelaide School of Mines. The names by Class number however require explanation.

Right from Class #1, many students changed classes. Some who failed a phase exam were dropped back a class. Some who clearly had advanced training prior to arriving at Torrens were advanced one or more classes. Some had ailments such as pneumonia, broken limbs which caused a class change. Some found the new life not to their liking and opted to return whence they had come. The convention adopted here therefore in listing people within classes is that they are shown as believed to be of the class that they joined immediately upon arrival at Torrens.

One factor which leads to the added confusion about class start dates lies in the dates shown on the Service Certificates (SC) of individuals. An individual or a whole class would arrive at Torrens on a particular date shown on the SC, but may not have started instruction at the School of Mines for any period up to six weeks later.

A further complication in identifying individuals with class numbers is an inexplicable anomaly of Navy Office records showing class numbers quite different from the numbers believed by those persons to be theirs. This is so only for classes #11 and beyond. There are two possible explanations. One is that in 1947/48 some New Zealand Navy RM's were trained in Adelaide, and as a consequence the Navy Office class numbering and the School of Mines class numbering may have been different. Another possible explanation is that in 1947 moves were being made to disband the Radio Mechanic Branch and to absorb all RM's into the about to be formed Electrical Branch. The last three classes to pass through the School of Mines had their terms and conditions of employment governed by CNO 149/47 to reflect the new regime of the Electrical Branch, and this also may have created a differing perception of class numbering. What do remain reasonably indisputable are the start and finish dates, bearing in mind of course the comment about Service Certificates above.

A chart showing class dates appears on the opposite page, and lists of names within classes appear in the following pages.

### FOOTNOTE TO THE NICKNAMES:

Some are traditional such as Lofty, Shorty, Blue. Others are understandable such as Dinger Bell, Bunny Hare, Dusty Miller, Chook Fowler. But others still are cryptic such as Tyabb Ted, Chloe, Sleeps, Bambi, Snide, Shambles. Here there would appear to be a small feast of research ready for some investigative psychologist seeking a topic for a post graduate thesis.

## NAMES BY CLASS

### CLASS #1

BAIL Thomas Leslie	Les
BLOOR George Ernest	
BRYANT Kenneth Allan	
GATELY Max	Gash
GEARD Deirn	Tich
GREEN Leslie	
HALL Terrence	Terry
HANLON Peter James	Pete
LUDBEY Francis Claud	Frank
MANNIX Jack	Doc
MCCARTHY Ronald Maurice	Ron
MILLER Desmond D	Dusty
PETERSON Maxwell G	Max
ROBERTS Edward	Eddie
STEPHENSON Maxwell	Max

### CLASS #2

AGNEW Gordon	Aggie
BOUCHER Edward(?)	Eddie
COSGROVE Michael John	Mick
COWAN Harold	Harry
GORDON John	
HICKS Neville	
KERR Leslie John	Jake
MATTHEWS	
MAY Sidney	Sid
MERRIFIELD Rex	
MORTON John	
O'NEAGHER Peter	
POOLE Maxwell	Max
PORHOUSE	Tassie
RICHARDS Basil	Bas
ROLAND Armand John	Shorty
TAYLOR William F	Blue
WOODS Gordon G	Pommy/Blue
YORK Gerald Ernest	Gerry/Yak

### CLASS #3

BAXTER Edward	Eddie
BRAY William	Bill
BROWN William	Bill
CHAMBERLAYNE Phillip Arthur	Phil
DONALD Kenneth Owen	Ken
FLAHERTY William	Bill
GALLOP Truby	Tom
HOSKING Geoff	
HUNTER Alan	
TINDAL Neil	
WEST Ronald Ernest	Ron
WOODS Rex	

### CLASS #4 (See page 5)

CHAFFEY Ben	
CORDON Reginald	Reg
DRURY Arthur Beeson	
ELDERING Garth	Slim
FARGHER William	Bill
FLOWER Robert C	Bunny
GEORGE Alfred	Alf
GLEESON James	Jim
GREEN Donald	Don
HANNINGTON Harold (?)	Hank
HOCKING Edward E	Ted
HORROCKS Glen	
LAW Bruce	Lofty
MARSHALL Phillip Alfred	Phil
MAXWELL John	Blue
MCCONVILLE William	Bill
MORAN Gerald B	Gerry
MOYLE Leonard	Len
PRESTON James	Jim/Jazza
PRIESTLY	Slim
REED Ronald Arthur	Ron
RICHARDS Sydney	Rick
SHARP Leonard	Len
STAINDL Keith Alfred	
THOMPSON David A M	Dave
WATSON Phillip Ross Hawley	Lofty
WHITE Alan	Persil/Knocker
WIGHTMAN David R	Blue
WITHERS S Richard	Pusser Dick



## Navy Radar Instruction At School Of Mines

TRAINING NAVY  
IN RADARSchool Of Mines  
Instruction

Trainees selected by the RAAF Australian Navy for non-commissioned rank as experts in radar maintenance will receive their initial training at the elaborately-equipped radio school at the School of Mines North terrace, where the first batch of 89 trainees are now completing their course.

Making this announcement yesterday, the Minister for Education (Mr. Roddall) said that though the school had been handed back to the School of Mines at the completion of the RAAF wartime training plan controlled by the Education Department, the facilities had again been made available to the department to carry out the present plan for the RAN.

Under the existing arrangement, a maximum of 120 trainees would be included in the training course of six months, but this number might be increased to meet later requirements. The men would enter the School of Mines as ordinary seamen and at the completion of the course would be transferred to HMAS Watson, the RAN radar school. At the end of 12 months' training, they would be appointed to the rank of petty officer.

## Tribute To Instructors

The Minister said that this unique peacetime training plan was a tribute to the officers of the Education Department who had established and controlled the radio school during the war for the training of RAAF personnel, with the development of radar and the demand for highly skilled maintenance men, the Navy had found its own training facilities inadequate. Impressed by the results obtained here during the war, it had sought the help of South Australia. This had been readily granted even though the Education Department had handed over the radio school to the School of Mines by which it had again been made available.

The plan is under the supervision of the Inspector of Technical Schools in the State Department (Mr. J. A. Walker) and Mr. W. Gill is headmaster. These officers were in control of the wartime plan which began in June, 1944, and resulted in the training of 484 men for the RAAF. This scheme opened with 17 trainees, and at times there were 182 men actually going through the school.

While the plan is in operation the school will also be available to students at the School of Mines, most of whom attend night classes. Equipment is valued at many thousands of pounds.

Visual aids have been developed to a marked degree to enable students to understand theoretical problems. Lecture rooms and laboratories have all been equipped with specially designed demonstration panels, complete with actual electric connections.



RAN students attending the radar school at the School of Mines busy in the transmitting laboratory. They are (left to right) F. Ludbeck (Tas.), B. Roberts (NSW), K. Bryant (Vic.), and P. Hanlon (Tas.).

The first class to be trained at the Adelaide School of Mines, Class #1, commencing in January 1946. Left to right are Frank Ludbey (not Ludbeck), Ed Roberts, Ken Bryant and Peter Hanlon.

## NAMES BY CLASS

### CLASS #5

BELL Arthur George  
 FULTON William  
 HARE Kenneth  
 HUETT Alan Raynor  
 JOHNSON Mervyn  
 KELLY Ernest Graham  
 O'BRYAN James  
 RICHARDS Ronald  
 SHARP Gregor Hugh  
 SOMMERVELLE James

Dinger  
 Bill  
 Bunny  
 Bonk/Butch  
 Merv  
 Ned  
 Shambles  
 Ron  
 Greg  
 Slim

### CLASS #6

ANSELL  
 CAIRNS Brian  
 CLARK James  
 CRAIG Keith  
 DEWEY Gerald  
 EARLE Alan  
 FAIRLIE Malcolm  
 HARRINGTON Gilbert  
 HAWKE Douglas W J  
 HEALY James  
 MCAREE  
 MCKEE Keith  
 McVIE  
 MOONEY Kenneth J  
 O'CONNELL Hilary Daniel  
 PERMYAKOFF A Nicolai  
 QUINTON William  
 WALSHAW Colin  
 WILLIAMS  
 ZOCH Kevin Joseph

Jim  
 Gerry  
 Chloe  
 Mal  
 Bull  
 Doug  
 Subiaco Jim  
 Blue  
 Hank  
 Blue  
 Bambi  
 Permy/nick  
 Bill  
 Col  
 Tassie  
 Emile

### CLASS #7

BUBB John  
 CUNNEEN James Patrick  
 DOYLE Murray Thomas  
 DUFFY Kevin  
 HART Maurice R  
 HUMPHREY John  
 JONES Ronald  
 KIRWAN Lawrence  
 McDONALD Ian  
 McRAE Francis J  
 MOWDAY Robert John  
 ROBERTSON Brian  
 ROBERTSON William J  
 STORER Leslie L

Jim  
 Tex  
 Maurie  
 Ron  
 Curley  
 Jock/Weed  
 Stokes/Frank  
 Jacky Jacky  
 Robbie  
 Bill  
 Lucky

### CLASS #8

ARUNDEL Harold  
 BARTY Alan  
 DUNN Ronald  
 FOGGON Philip  
 GERRY George  
 HOLMAN Peter G  
 McCALLUM Peter G  
 MURPHY Wallace  
 RILEY George  
 RUSSELL John  
 WESTON Peter

Harry  
 Speed/Digger  
 Filthy  
 Cherub  
 Ercus  
 Spud

## NAMES BY CLASS

### CLASS #9

ALLEN Gordon  
 FOX Leslie  
 GREEN Roy  
 HASTINGS Frank  
 HOSKINS Allen R  
 HOWDEN Ronald  
 IVORY Michael  
 MCKEW James  
 MCPHEE Alan  
 PARRY Colin  
 SAYWELL John Stephen  
 SEDWICK Nigel C  
 SHAW Neville  
 SMITH Geoffrey  
 STEVENS George Woodfull

### CLASS #10

Gus	ANDERSON Neil	Andy
Snide	BROOKS David	Dave
Nat	DUNCOMBE James	Jim
Horse	LAWFORD Patrick Francis	Pat/Fagin/Jimpy
Skelly	LYONS Ronald	Ron/Boomer
Ron	MCCOLL John Duncan Neil	Dave
Mick	SCANLAN John	
Hammer	TURNBULL Donald	Don
Blue		
Col		
Spider		
Tyabb Ted		
Smouge/Smithy		
Steve		

### CLASS #11

BROWN Raymond  
 BUCK-PITT Victor  
 COLLINS James  
 DUNCAN John Andrew  
 FOWLER Frank  
 GRANT William J T  
 HUBBARD Stanley  
 MACNISH Colin John  
 O'HALLORAN Michael  
 PEARSALL William  
 PUTRE Robert  
 RUTHEVEN Kevin  
 TULK Keverne  
 WHYBIN Raymond  
 WILSON Norman

### CLASS #12

Ray	AHEARN Robert	Bob
Blue	CAMPBELL Alexander Bruce	Jock
Lofty	CHEETHAM Lloyd James	
Chook	CLEARY James	Jim
Big Bill	DYER R T	Tim/Bob
Mother	HOTCHKIS Ronald Ernest	Jabs/Bunga
Shorty/Col	INNES-KER Byron Robert	Bob
Mick/Mike	LAUGHTON John	Mother
Prof	MOORE Victor Lawrence	Pony/Bunny
Bob/Putter	PEOPLES Alan Carlisle Bertalli	Doc
Bill	POPPINS Lindsay Thomas	Bill
Moose/Ferret	RUTHERFORD	Blue
Ray	STOERMER W Lloyd	
Tug/Norm	WHITE John	Jack
	WILLIAMS Alwyn Joseph Griffith	Cuddles/Stacker
	WILLIAMS William Corby	Billy/Corby

## NAMES BY CLASS

### CLASS #13

BANNON Roderick A  
 BERRY John  
 BURKE Sebastian Ernest  
 FITZGERALD Bernard  
 FURNISS Colin  
 HUDSON  
 LACEY Thomas  
 MILLS Kevin Benjamin  
 MORRISON Norman McKay  
 SKUSE Neville  
 SWEENEY Brian William

HAYWOOD G. RNZN.

### CLASS #14

Rod	ARBUCKLE Gordon	
Jack	BONNEY Kevin Maxwell	Trunky
Seb/Ernie	COPPING Frank	Blue
Bernie	FENEY Patrick	Pat
Tubby	GODDARD Neville	Nev
Lofty	MILLER Geoffrey	Geoff
Tom	PETERSON Kevin James	
	POTTER Thomas	Tom
Norm	POWELL James	Jim
	VERREN John	
Curley	WILKES Michael	Mick

### CLASS #15

AHLQUIST Ivor Jack	Jack
BEATH Dudley	
BENNETT Jack	
BYRNE Jack	
EGAN Kevin	Junior
FAULKNER Reginald Claude	Reg
KELLY Patrick Thomas	
MARR Ronald	Bluey
MORRIS Raymond	Ray
MUNRO Gordon John	Darby
NAISH Neville	Nev
NELSON Kevin John	Issac
ROBINSON Neville J	Nev
ROWAN Victor John	Vic
TRIMBLE Alan Errol	Snakes
WELSBY John	

### CLASS UNKNOWN

BLUETT  
 FLYNN  
 MCLEOD  
 PHILLIPS  
 PRITCHARD Christopher  
 SHARP Raymond  
 SPAIN Jesus



RAN ratings who finished their radio course at the School of Mines yesterday making adjustments to radio sets at the school on their final day. They are (from bottom)—Leading Seamen R. C. Falkner, N. J. Robinson, I. J. Ahlquist, and K. J. Nelson.

## Navy Wireless School Closes

A class of 16 Navy radio and electrical mechanics who yesterday completed their training at a special school in Adelaide, are the last of nearly 1,000 RAAF and Australian and New Zealand navy technicians who have been trained here in the past five years.

The 16 Navy men who completed the last course yesterday left last night for Sydney for the final stage of their training. In future service radio technicians will be wholly trained at Navy and Air Force schools, and it is expected that a new school will be set up at the Flinders Naval Depot in Victoria.

The radio school, conducted at the School of Mines, was founded by the Education Department in 1944 to give a series of six months' courses to RAAF wireless mechanics. It continued training RAAF men until 1946, and when the last course passed out, the RAN asked that the school be maintained to train Navy radio and electrical mechanics.

The final class to be trained at the School of Mines Adelaide, Class #15 finishing in April 1949. From the bottom are Reg Falkner, Neville Robinson, Jack Ahlquist and Kevin Nelson.

## **HMAS Cerberus**

The alternative name of Flinders Naval Depot is somewhat of a misnomer as the nearest railway station is Crib Point, and the depot is miles from the town of Flinders. But the contraction, FND (Efendee) is easy and quick to pronounce and has gained popularity over the past seventy two years since FND was established.

Nestling against Hanns Inlet on Westernport Bay of Victoria, FND has all the outward appearances of a penitentiary with its dispersed low rise buildings, wide roads and paucity of vegetation. In fact, to observe the inmates periodically being subjected to physical tasks such as squad drilling and PT, you could easily be persuaded that you were observing punishment. Any such conclusions would be light years from the truth. Certainly discipline pervades the whole establishment, but it is an institution devoted to education. FND is the college where the R.A.N. conducts much of its training of raw recruits through to senior specialists in engineering, weapons, seamanship, catering etc. It is a place where character is developed, and the author has the strong opinion that if all institutions of education modelled their philosophy of education on that of Cerberus, Australia's juvenile and other crime rates would diminish substantially.

It was into this environment that the 230 RM's came to commence their training between late 1945 and late 1948. "J" Block Recruit School was their bedroom so to speak. It was a large timber framed and floored rectangular room about fifteen by thirty metres, and a pitched roof but no ceiling, (see photos #4 & #6). Sturdy cylindrical steel bars about 10 centimetres in diameter were mounted horizontally, parallel spaced about five metres apart and about two metres from the timber floor. These were for the purpose of suspending hammocks, the sailors' bed. The term used was "slinging" a hammock. In one corner of the room was a strongly constructed timber framed corral into which the hammocks were neatly stowed each morning. Along one wall were clothes lockers, each having a capacity of no more than 0.08 cubic metres. Into this confined space the recruit was required to neatly stow his entire issue of uniformed clothes, washed and unwashed, boots and all! There was also a wire stretched along one section of a wall for the purpose of hanging bath towels. Each towel had to be folded longitudinally in three (not two and not four) such that the owner's name was clearly displayed in the middle of one end.

The routine each day was something like the following:

**0600 Wakey Wakey.** A bugle or bosun's pipe was played through the public address system, coincident with one of the instructors walking beneath the hammocks with a large stick belting each one and shouting that if we didn't get up the sun would burn our eyes out - whatever that meant. There followed frantic scrabbling to wash, shave, lash up and stow the hammock, dress in PT gear.

Lashing the hammock required the use of a length of light rope and some manual dexterity such that the hammock was bundled up into a long sausage shape about 1.8 metres long and 40 centimetres diameter. The rope was lashed around the canvas sausage in 7, not 6 and not 8, circumferential turns such that even with excessive mishandling the rope lashing would remain intact.

**0630 PT for 20 minutes**

0650 Dress in the "dress of the day". A number or some cryptic words would be announced over the PA system requiring all on board to dress identically for the day's activities. Dress of the day generally took absolutely no cognizance of the weather conditions and was believed to be selected by the scientific process of pin sticking. Most days we were reasonably comfortably dressed, but sometimes we froze and at others we sweltered in our unseasonal garments.

0700 Breakfast and the long queues. It was the best time of the day. Fresh from a sound night's sleep, hungry and salivating at the smell of bacon cooking and toast burning, bragging to new mates, and then relaxing for 15 minutes gathering moral strength to face another day of square bashing.

0750 Out Pipes and fall in for Colours. This meant everyone on board except those required for essential duties, mustered in organisational units neatly lined up on the roads outside the accommodation blocks in three ranks facing the ensign mast sited at one end of the large open playing field. At precisely 0800 the quartermaster would announce "Eight o'clock sir". The officer of the watch would order "Make it so". Eight bells would be smartly and loudly struck on the big bell outside the drill hall. With one shouted command the whole parade of perhaps 1,000 men and women would be called to attention, the band would strike up the national anthem and the white ensign would be slowly hoisted at a pace carefully timed to have the head of the ensign reach the mast head as the last bar of the anthem was played. The bunting tosser who got his ensign there too early or too late was mildly admonished. If however he tangled the halliards, he was in for some real punishment.

0801 Parade march off for training. For new recruits this meant "square bashing" which was seemingly endlessly marching and counter marching, standing at attention, falling out and falling in, off caps, doubling, slow marching, dressing by the right and left etc etc. All this was done in the "bull ring", a soft dirt parade ground. A certain amount of this rich red soil was carried off each evening in our boots, around our necks and elsewhere. The instructors were not inhuman demons, they simply seemed like they were. Generally they were Leading Seamen or Acting Petty Officers identified as having supervisory potential. They also had loud voices and macabre senses of humour. Off parade ground they were almost certainly normal people, but on parade they were martinets whose words were absolute law.

On rainy days, such training was conducted at the "covered in" parade ground, a large asphalted covered area with a corrugated iron roof and no sides. In winter, the chill wind howled through this simple edifice and we were glad to keep moving in order to stay warm

1020 Stand Easy. A smoke for those who were addicted, a drink of water from a nearby tap, and a thankful sit down on the ground. No such luxuries like Cafe Bars or chairs.

1030 Out Pipes and continue training

1145 Fall in and march back to barracks for lunch. Lunch was usually a hot cooked meal of some substance including meat and three veg.

1250 Out pipes and fall in to march off for training.

1600 Fall in and march back to barracks for Tea - the English tradition. Tea comprised huge pots of steaming tea, mugs, milk, sugar, thick slices of bread, butter and jam. The good sailors had free time then to write letters, play sport, recuperate and patch the blistered feet, wash clothes, read a newspaper or indulge in other innocuous pastimes. The bad guys who had committed misdemeanours like having untidy lockers, talking while marching, being late falling in, not lashing their hammocks correctly were required to do extra duties in this their free time.

1830 Hands to Supper, the main evening meal. This also was a hot cooked meal. The day of the week could be correctly guessed by the menu. Thursday night supper was the time that the local Crib Point mobile food vendor did a roaring trade. This enterprising man had the concession to drive in to the Depot his trailer from which he sold delicacies like meat pies and pasties, soft drinks and sweets. Thursday night main meal was tripe and onions, dubbed boiled sand shoes because this dish not only looked like that but tasted like that also.

2000 Rounds. This required the Duty Officer and Petty Officer to carry out an inspection of all quarters. The duty watch sweeper of each dormitory saluted and reported to the duty officer and accompanied him on his tour of the dormitory. Any out of line situation was the responsibility of the sweeper, not the miscreant. If a locker door was open or if a newspaper was lying on the floor, the sweeper was responsible, and he copped it.

2200 Out lights. Literally. All dormitory lights were turned off and all recruits were expected to go to sleep. In the initial weeks of square bashing, it was rare for any recruit to want to stay awake after 10 pm.

Once the parade ground drill instructions had been imprinted forever on the recruits' minds, more interesting activities such as sailing a whaler and firing a rifle on the rifle range were introduced. Left handed persons were regarded with derision, suspicion and despair. This latter because training notes were all written for right handed riflemen. A left hander was a distinct liability to a range instructor and was invariably assigned to "watch and learn". Not so exciting was learning to pull (pull not row) a cutter, a very heavy large timber constructed open boat propelled by 8 oarsmen with one oar each, and steered by a cox'n with tiller and rudder aft. Cutters had a shippable mast, a foresail and mainsail. We used to sneer at these ungainly craft. They were so heavy, cumbersome and really didn't look at all classy like so many of the sporting pleasure craft. Clearly to us moderns, Navy Office was living in the Stone Age supplying the fleet with such vessels. However, once we had experienced sea time in potential ship wreck conditions like North Atlantic gales and Tropical Cyclones, we would never have traded one sea-worthy cutter for ten floating "tupperware" products

Adjacent to the bull ring was the sail loft, a two level timber building in which was housed all the accoutrements necessary to have whalers and cutters propelled by man or wind. This was a magic sanctum with wonderful smells of rope, tar, varnish, canvas. There was a large board on which some old salt had lovingly executed about 60 different examples of knots, hitches, splices and fancy rope work. There were sails hanging up and sails folded away. Lengths of rope were either neatly coiled (clockwise not counter



clockwise) on the deck (not floor), or carefully made up into hanks and suspended from large wooden pegs in the bulkheads (not walls). There were blocks and tackles, oars, rollocks and crutches, rudders, tillers, hand binnacles, international code flags all neatly rolled and stowed into pigeon holed racks. The whole atmosphere was one of impeccable cleanliness and order. Except on occasions when detailed off on a Saturday morning to sweep out the sail loft, recruits were very actively discouraged from entering this exclusive club.

Also a stone's throw from the bull ring was the wharf and Hanns Inlet. This latter is a relatively sheltered but shallow stretch of tidal water across which the training ships, Bathurst class corvettes HMAS Gladstone and HMAS Latrobe, regularly sailed. The role of these ships was to take classes of young seamen and young officers to sea and provide on the job experience of the many duties of sailors at sea. Hanns Inlet opens into Westernport Bay which in turn opens into Bass Strait, one of the world's most unpredictable expanses of sea water. Thus in the space of less than an hour, many a strutting young recruit was reduced from bravado to abject agony as he entered the choppy waters of Bass Strait, retching his last two meals for plankton fodder.

Considering the concept of effective return on capital investment, the Drill Hall must have ranked as one of the most successful such investments not only in the history of Cerberus, but also in the Commonwealth of Australia. This building served a multitude of purposes, and was in constant use for about 105 hours of the available 168 per week. On week days it served as the venue for Physical Training activities such as vaulting horse, wall bar climbing, rope climbing. It also served as lecture venues for large groups, especially from the adjacent Gunnery School. PT Instructors received much of their practical training here. It was the scene of many a basket ball match in the dog watches. In the evenings it served as a concert hall or a film theatre whichever entertainment had been organised. On more than one occasion a symphony orchestra performed under its roof. On Sunday mornings the doors to an annex were opened to reveal a chapel where the Anglican and Roman Catholic Chaplains conducted Communion and Mass respectively - at different times of course. Later on Sunday mornings the hall would be filled with all on board for compulsory divine service. There was a mezzanine area where officers had privileged seating for evening entertainments, and where members of the WRANS had segregated seating for Sunday Divine Service. Sunday afternoon and evenings it was again given over to indoor sporting and other recreational tasks.

There was a magic smell in the interior of this building. The floor was forever being polished by a number of men undergoing mild punishment, and the tons of polish over the years gave the place a distinctive pungency. The ropes and rope mats exuded their own contribution to the pot pourri. Brass was virtually everywhere, and all this was polished, sometimes twice and thrice daily. Over the years there must have been used sufficient liquid brass polish to float a destroyer. It is indeed unfortunate that this historic and really valuable building had to be demolished in recent years because of considerable deterioration in the foundations and main structural timbers.

For the first 5 week ends, all recruits were required to stay on board. Shore leave was banned. Saturday morning was spent doing innocuous tasks like polishing the gym floor, sweeping out the offices of the various gunnery, torpedo, engineering etc schools. After

lunch, the afternoon and evening was free for legitimate pastimes such as dhobeying, writing letters home, playing cricket or football. Consumption of alcoholic drinks by recruits in training was an absolute no no. Saturday evening, with a bit of luck there was a passable movie to watch. Sunday morning after colours there was usually an hour's emu parade, then divisions and divine service which usually lasted until about lunch time. Sunday afternoon was the time to really smarten up one's appearance for this was the one time of the week that visitors were allowed on board. One simply had to look as smart, polished, suave, sophisticated and dashing as possible for there were often sisters and cousins of other recruits to be suitably impressed and captivated.

After six consecutive weeks of initial training, new recruits were allowed weekend shore leave from 1600 Friday to 2200 Sunday. In those days a special steam train came right into the depot and ran direct to Flinders Street railway station stopping briefly for let downs at Frankston, Mordialloc and Caulfield. "Up the line" it was called. "Are you going up the line this weekend?" "No I'm duty watch" or "You bet, I've got up homers at a mate's". This latter meant a bed had been provided for the weekend at a friend's place.

The period of six weeks was scientifically computed using an algorithm which factored in time for the shaven head to grow hair again, an estimation of how long a young man could retain his sanity without social contact with the opposite sex, and a naive belief that sufficient of the training would stick and cause good disciplined behaviour. Most of the time this proved correct, and although there were the inevitable aberrations, very few were caused by RM's. RM's were no different from all the other recruits except in one respect. The RM's knew that any misconduct would preclude the imminent transfer to Torrens which was reputed to be almost Utopia by comparison with FND, and which promised all the excitement of learning the mysteries of electrics and radio.

Eventually the short stay at FND came to an end, and the next class of RM's was drafted to Torrens. This meant packing up the kit bag with all belongings, and with hammock waiting outside "J" Block for transport to Crib Point station. Again a wait for an electric train to Spencer Street to report to the RTO, Railway Transport Officer. The RTO issued each with a single second class ticket to Adelaide, and at about 7.30 pm, the overnight steam train set off for Adelaide. Purgatory had ended. High adventure was ahead.

## HMAS Torrens

Torrens was the name of the shore establishment, or Naval depot at Port Adelaide during world war 2 and for a few years after hostilities ceased. This was to be the home for all the newly recruited Radio Mechanics while they were trained over a period of approximately 6 months in electrical and wireless telegraphy theory. The training was conducted at the Adelaide School of Mines for 8 hours a day, five days each week.

When Max Petersen and the rest of Class #1 arrived at Torrens in February 1946, no one seemed to know them, or indeed wanted to know them. To the grizzled veterans anxious to pay off from the Service, the ODRM's were a nuisance. So in predictable fashion, they were sent on 4 days leave until "someone in authority" took charge and got things organised. At this time thousands of HO's were paying off. Torrens could house a maximum of 200 persons only and the problem the Navy had was what to do with all these men and women. The answer was the classic of putting them into watches, but instead of the 3 watch system, these lucky people were put into what was probably a 30 watch system. This meant that they lived ashore and came to the depot once a month to pick up their pay until the administrative system finally ground out their discharge papers.

To keep some of these men occupied, working parties were formed to refurbish a ship named "Yandra" moored in the Torrens River at Port Adelaide. Yandra had been requisitioned by the RAN and was being returned to her owners as she was no longer needed for Naval duties. Each day as the working party was marched out of Torrens' main gate, the rating in charge of the working party slipped a piece of paper into the hand of the Bos'n's Mate. On this was written the name of the pub where the working party could be found in an emergency. This started a tradition which as far as was possible in the circumstances was emulated periodically over the next three years by successions of keen young RM's. Also refitted partly using RM labour was the Antarctic vessel "Wyatt Earp".

Yandra was in her early stage of refurbishment when a fierce storm blew up one night. Duty watch was "turned to", and Ross "Lofty" Watson was assigned to take care of Yandra. Yandra broke her moorings and was drifting helplessly when a tug came alongside. The tug's skipper shouted at Lofty "Take a line through the fairleads and wrap it round a bollard". In Lofty's own words "I didn't speak Urdu so didn't have a clue what he was saying. But I got the gist and guessed correctly. That tug skipper thought I was the most useless matelot he had ever struck".

The Regulating CPO (Master At Arms) was an old salt by the name of Poulton. He possibly had a name given to him by his mother but we were innocent of this. To us he was "Chief". He was trained as a Chief Gunner's Mate, had seen umpteen years of service in the Far East and was personally instrumental in defeating the Japanese navy in battle on more than one occasion. Being a resourceful person, it was natural therefore that in times of crisis, Chief could be relied upon to take charge. Such an occasion arose when there was a blockage in the Depot's sewer system. On prior occasions of blockage, a local plumbing service operator attended and remedied the failure by using water pressure from the fire-main to gently pressurise the sewer. Then after a judicious pause, the pressure would be turned off. This process was repeated cyclically until the offending blockage capitulated and suddenly cleared itself.

Chief had witnessed this process more than once, and reasoned that "If that fool can do it, so can I". Consequently, Duty Watch, all ODRM's including Bill Robertson, was "turned to" and the fire main was connected by canvas hose to the B.S.P. connector on the sewer. Chief opened the valve to pressurise the hose. The hose filled and grew taut. Chief decided to turn it off and took action but forgot that standpipe valves operate in reverse to domestic valves. The more he turned it "off", the greater the pressure. The inevitable happened with large steel sewer covers at intervals along the road being propelled with considerable force skywards by what are normally the contents of a sewer. Finally he got it right and turned the pressure off. The blockage was removed but with considerable residual mess. In true supervisory spirit he announced "Well, that seems to have solved the problem. Duty Watch can clean up. I'm going home now."

Across the road from the Depot was the Boatshed. This building was host to surplus small craft which were maintained by RM's doing such necessary tasks as pumping out rain and sea water, checking moorings, and generally looking as though they were real sailors. Eventually many of these vessels were sold, requiring Chief to find alternative activities for his idle RM's. This situation was resolved by the simple expedient of having the whalers rigged for sailing, to be sailed in true seaman like fashion to Outer Harbour. At least that was Chief's intention. The RM's enthusiasm was restrained to put it mildly. But if nothing else they were resourceful, capable of turning adversity to advantage and perceptive of the benefits to be accrued. All hands pitched in with good cheer and vigour. Chief couldn't believe his eyes. Rigged whalers with joyous crews duly sallied forth and disappeared around the bend, to return at sunset. Some of the crews had an unfortunate condition diagnosed by paramedic Bill Robertson as "Alcoholic Constipation". The symptoms were that the afflicted person couldn't pass a hotel. The treatment was to run the whaler up the sand of a little nearby beach, and to proceed to the bar for a strategy conference. This typically would take about 3 hours, after which the whaler was launched and sailed back to the boat shed.

The incinerator at Torrens was a decidedly useful appendage. Not only was it capable of destroying by fire anything put into it, it was also conveniently located adjacent to the perimeter fence and allowed easy scaling of such fence, thus obviating the tiresome need to fall in with liberty men for shore leave.

The laundry was far superior to those at Cerberus, and that of Watson also. There were electric coppers. All dhobey could be thrust in, boiled up and came out looking dazzling white. Well almost all. Nigel (Spider) Sedwick was meticulous about his appearance at all times. He, like most RM's viewed with considerable distaste the pusser issue uniforms. But while most of us timidly accepted these hideous bags as our lawful lot in life, Nigel, being a trail blazer, decided to do something positive. What was needed was to shrink the woollen garment so that it fitted snugly instead of looking like a circus tent. The solution was simply to place the offending garment in one of the coppers, add some "Persil", bring to to boil, simmer gently and presto, a tiddley suit. Possibly a combination of excessive dosage of Persil coupled with an hour's boiling resulted in a suit that became bright orange - and consequently unwearable.

The route from the Depot at Birkenhead to the shopping centre at Port Adelaide was via the opening Jervois bridge across the Port river. At night this bridge was illuminated by very bright Sodium Arc lights which at certain times of the year attracted large blue

swimmer crabs, quite discenable from the bridge above. However, when initial attempts were made to capture these succulent beasts there was total failure. But as indicated by Bill Robertson, these were resourceful men. Team work was the watchword. In a team of four, one boiled up the copper. Three scaled the fence per courtesy of the incinerator. One of these three became the spotter on the bridge. The second conned the dinky (borrowed from the boatshed) as directed by the spotter and the third netted the spoils. One hour's work under cover of darkness and pure culinary bliss was achieved.

Possibly it was innocent activities like this that led to a perception in Navy Office that all was not well in the far flung Torrens depot. No less a personage than the Secretary Naval Board wrote on 2nd September 1946 to The Flag Officer-in-Charge, Sydney to advise, among other issues, that *"Lieutenant H.T.McDonald R.A.N. has been detailed as Liaison Officer between 'TORRENS' and the Department of Education, Adelaide, and this appointment should overcome the lack of control and discipline amongst ratings undergoing instruction at the Adelaide School of Mines"*.

During a very bad patch of weather in 1947, the R.A.N. survey vessel Barcoo was blown into the shallows at Glenelg. It is reliably reported that one lady thought the Russians were invading and was observed to be running up and down the beach shouting that they *"... couldn't land here"*. A few otherwise unoccupied RM's were press-ganged into helping refloat her. (Barcoo, not the lady). The only damage was the dented pride of the Navigating officer.

Possibly the most enterprising person at Torrens was not a sailor, but Clarrie the newspaper boy. Clarrie was a born salesman with a hide as thick as any pusser's duff. Although an unauthorised civilian, he talked his way past the duty guard each evening and worked his way through Penelope's dormitories hawking his newspapers and magazines. He was a useful person to have around in the off pay weeks because he was always good for a loan of ten shillings or a pound. His catch cry was *"A pound for twenty five"* which meant that he would lend a pound (twenty shillings) and require twenty five shillings in return next pay day. Assuming that the money was borrowed for seven days, the annualised percent profit he made on such a deal was 6,500%. Despite this, he had a steady stream of clients. His newspaper vending business was patently a cover up for his real vocation.

Doug Hawke was at one stage of an age, less than 18 years, which required him to be on board by 2200 each night, despite the fact that his parents' home was in Adelaide. One night Doug was late, and although he did not turn into a pumpkin, he had to find a way over the barbed wire fence without suffering damage to body, or more importantly uniform. Fortuitously a civilian walking past acceded to Doug's request for a leg over. Next morning this civilian had metamorphosed into a naval officer on parade, and who for some inexplicable reason simply smiled at Doug and took no further action. One of life's little mysteries of the time.

"Curley" Kirwan, Tex" Doyle or A.N.Other, we will never really know who, was apprehended by the local constabulary once for trying to start someone else's motor bike. When fined by the local magistrate the guilty party is alleged to have enquired if the fine could be paid in "yaffle buns" instead of the customary currency of the land.

For the obvious reason of the need to avoid a civil action for defamation, there is alleged to have been a certain Chief Gunners Mate at Torrens who finished his one year of primary school education prematurely. In the process of learning the alphabet, he was not taught the letters "G" nor "H". RM names like Hocking and Hannington sounded like Ockin and Anninton. One of this CGM's favourite expressions was *"The trouble with youse ODRM's is that yer too sterile."* (Meaning virile we think). Another was *"Youse ODRM's 'd eat yer young"*.

In the very early days of Classes 1 & 2, bags were issued for the purpose of carrying study books to and from the School of Mines. These bags were the sewn cloth ones that bicycle riders used to wear, and had the brand name "MALVERN STAR" printed across them. Those were heady days when meal tickets were issued for lunch and evening meals when evening lectures were conducted. The evening meal was taken at the Cheer Up Hut, and lunch was partaken in a building in Pirie Street near the Palladium.

The School of Mines establishment was part of the SA Education department and was physically located in a solid three storey building on the corner of North Terrace and Frome Road. It is now part of the University of South Australia.

The instructors were civilians and were all dedicated teachers. This did not stop irreverent RM's from making fun of them whenever opportunities presented themselves. One was, in hindsight, a dear gentle fellow going prematurely bald. His name is David Cox but he was cruelly nicknamed Skull. He was the first instructor the RM's met as his specialty was AC and DC theory. He was famous for his oft repeated quotation *"The Series motor, off load, will increase in speed until it flies to destruction"*. Every RM worth his salt will carry that quotation engraved on his heart.

Mr Cox one day was patiently describing AC theory to a somnolent class which was suddenly enlivened by Andy Anderson's loud vocal revelation, *"Oh now I see why AC motors are used for lifts. The lift goes up on the positive half cycle and down on the negative"*. Poor Mr Cox was distraught.

Another instructor was Mr Lum, a quiet and gentlemanly figure ever helpful and infinitely patient. Then there was Mr Weeks who exacted retribution on his delinquent pupils by leaving charged capacitors lying on the work benches. When given instructions to tidy up, the innocent student who picked up the charged capacitor received a hefty bolt of electricity. But retaliation came when a group of unknowns literally picked up Mr Weeks' DKW car, and placed it snugly between two large posts firmly embedded in the ground.

Don Crowley, "Practical Jack" and Mr Winkler were three other excellent lecturers. Harold Winkler was ex RAAF and he sported an imposing handle bar moustache. His specialty was receiver design, and it wasn't long before the superhetrodyne was christened the "superwinklerdyne".

In the early days of classes #1, and #2 the classes were marched through the streets of Port Adelaide to the railway station at Glanville. The steam train then carried them to Adelaide Central. From here as Max Petersen remembers, they did a leisurely stroll along North Terrace to the School, but when classes #3 and #4 arrived all were required to march in columns of 3. In those days of the immediate post war with petrol rationing still

with us, the roads of Adelaide were really quite bare of vehicular traffic. The only real hazard of marching along North Terrace was to be barked at by a curious dog. The return each afternoon was a reverse procedure. At a later date, buses were organised to take them direct from Torrens to the School, and return in the afternoon, a significant time effective improvement.

Although there was a class leader for each class, being one of the class his orders were only to be obeyed when in the presence of a higher being. So to ensure all RM's conducted themselves properly while in transit, a Leading Seaman or Petty Officer was assigned to supervise. The first such person was a PO Radar Mechanic awaiting discharge. His name was Don Badman. There was a succession of class supervisors, and one, around early 1947 was "Guts" Standley who later became Master At Arms at FND. Guts earned his nickname by his assiduous application to furthering the brewing industry's sales. He had not only a remarkable capacity for consuming beer but he seemed to be quite immune from its intoxicating effects. Guts put this second occupation of his to good use between the time we arrived at the School each morning and the time we left each afternoon by pulling beer in one of Adelaide's pubs. He reasoned that this too was using time effectively.

One extremely conscientious and sincere RM had a nick name something like "Pusser" because he was always doing things correctly. While others dressed in varying extremes of tiddley uniform, this young man unwaveringly stuck to his pusser issue uniform. One day while all were assembled for the inevitable daily inspection, the inspecting officer sent "Pusser" off parade because the officer deemed he was poorly dressed and needed to smarten his appearance and look more like everyone else.

Phil Foggon was remarkable for a number of achievements. Possibly the most significant was that for as long as he held his commission he was acclaimed by his subordinates as a good officer. There are the cynics who claim that the expression "good officer" is an oxymoron. Nevertheless it is true that Phil was liked and respected by his troops for his management of them. Phil was also a dab hand at things mechanical. At Torrens he acquired an old and damaged sewing machine. With care he rebuilt it and then proceeded to help others in the care and modification of their uniforms. Then there was the clapped out old piano in Penelope's recreation room. Phil pulled it apart, added new felts where needed, replaced strings, tuned it and then played it with panache.

Food and eating were important parts of the lives of the RM's. However pay was a pittance and not to be wasted on purchasing food except in cases of extreme hardship.

Breakfast at Torrens was basic but healthy, if you had a strong constitution. To face the rigors of the day we were served with a bowl of burgoo (see Terms for an explanation but sort of like up-market gruel) and two hard boiled eggs. In the middle of the big bowl of hot burgoo was a lump of butter. No luxuries like side plates. The eggs one accepted in outstretched hand. There were simply two alternatives, eat or starve.

In the early classes lunch was a pleasant interlude at places like the YWCA and Open House, but in later classes lunch was awful to say the least. As Allen Hoskins recalls it, *"Duty watch was required to prepare sandwiches at breakfast time. These were packed in containers and transported in the buses each day. The bread was large thick slices, and*

*because butter was in short supply, it was heated till it became liquid, then spread on the bread with a brush. By lunch time these concoctions were fit only for use as fill for earthworks. But in the absence of anything else, we ate them. Later an attempt was made to provide hot meals for lunch with devices called Hot Boxes."*

Surprisingly, none of us suffered from scurvy, beri beri or other vitamin deficient conditions. By the same token, obesity was unknown.

Being at the advanced ages of 17 through 19, and thus sophisticated men of the world, when our meagre pay allowed we would frequent one of Port Adelaide's watering holes. The favourite brew according to taste was West End. But the product with the most potent and lasting effect was Coopers. So if we were feeling flush with funds, it was West End. But much of the time Coopers was the preferred choice.

As most RM's at Torrens were merely adolescents with little thought of adult responsibilities, the idea of one of their mates tying the matrimonial knot was as incomprehensible as contemplation of leaping from the Jervois bridge into the murky waters of the Port River. John Duncan took the plunge (matrimonial not bridge) and married Peg one long weekend in the Adelaide Registrar's office with Norm Wilson bravely standing by to attest to the sanity of both. Peg was not without sense of humour in sewing coloured bows on to the legs of John's underpants, much to the delight of his class mates back at depot. Their honeymoon consisted of gazing into each other's eyes until about 2300 each night, then John sprinting for the last bus from Henley Beach to finally burst through Torrens main gate before the portcullis fell at midnight.

Adelaide suffered a sporting malaise which recognised cricket as THE summer game and Aussie Rules as THE winter game. A determined effort on the part of a number of RM's from the brash eastern states rocked the equanimity of the Adelaide sporting establishment by introducing a totally foreign game called Rugby. To confuse the locals as well as astonish them, they were introduced to not one but two codes of Rugby called League and Union. Insurrectionists like Pat Lawford, Lloyd Cheetham, Roy Green, John Scanlan and others with "mug shots" in photos #32 and #33, are unlikely to ever find a final resting place in the ruffled skies above Adelaide.

Animal mascots were popular in those days, and Torrens had its own mascot, a dog named Spot. The depot routine existed solely to suit Spot's pleasures of eating, sleeping and barking. At meal times, Spot was always ready to receive left overs, and he had a quite undiscerning palate. During the day when the depot had only a handful of sailors lounging around, Spot would select one of many quiet warm or cool places and have a lengthy kip. He needed these kips to restore his strength after furiously barking at every order shouted at the morning parades, and to fortify himself for more barking at every order given in the various evening parades.

While imposed discipline was firm, peer discipline was, on occasions, harsh. One ODRM, nameless for reasons of national security, was consistently casual about matters of personal hygiene. Punishment meted out by his peers was to lock him in a cupboard full of dirty linen, football boots and other unsavoury items of apparel. The treatment effected a satisfactory cure.



Some young RM's courted ladies resident at the WYCA Hostel in Woodville, just off the Port Road. The matron was conscious of her responsibility to her charges, and locked the front door each evening at 2200 hours. The caretaker, a sympathetic gentleman, surreptitiously removed the tumblers from the lock such that it could be turned by a nail file or thrippeny bit. A practical example of love laughing at the locksmiths. However, a higher being decreed that those who broke the rules paid a penalty. The last bus to Port Adelaide left the city around 2230, it was a long walk down the lonely road back to depot, and only the fabulously rich could afford a taxi fare - even if taxis ran that late at night in Adelaide.

Twice yearly, all serving members of the R.A.N. were given home leave. This meant that travel cost was paid and travel time allowed for each serving member to travel from his assigned ship or shore establishment to his home port. Home port was defined as that major city from whence he was recruited or other as amended officially in subsequent years. The travel vehicle in those days was steam train. For the Torrens Terrors, those whose home port was Adelaide had it made in that they could be home in a matter of hours - or less. Those in Melbourne had an overnight train ride - acceptable. Perth and Sydneyites spent two nights on the train - a drag. For Brisbane persons it was three nights - a real drag. And if you lived in Cairns, Townsville or other such exotic places, it could take up to five days and nights of travelling before leave started. This could be tolerated as one was "going home". Returning however required strong moral fortitude.

There was no such thing as having a sleeper on the train. For the whole night you sat up in an uncomfortable Second Class bench seat sharing the compartment with 7 others, at least one of whom snored loudly, one talked incessantly and one drank himself insensible. Throughout the night the train stopped at innumerable country stations where there was much clanking of milk cans, shunting of additional carriages, and compartment doors being banged open and shut at irregular intervals. Showers at railway stations were primitive. As the interstate trains usually travelled in the night time, there was time to be killed during the day while waiting for the next train. By the time you reached your destination you were ready for a week's sleep.

When air travel started to become affordable and popular in the late 40's, many servicemen wanted to have the option of supplementing from their own income the difference between the rail fare and the air fare. Air travel was still slow (Sydney to Melbourne in 2 and 1/2 hours flying time in a Convair), but a lot quicker than 14 hours on the train with an hour stop at Albury because of the change in rail gauge. Requesting this was akin to asking the Archbishop of Canterbury for a donation of sacramental wine for the PO's Mess guest night. Not only was such a concept sacreligious, but quite impossible to implement. It was rigid, insensitive, never-been-done-before, too-hard, and they-would-never-approve-it attitudes like this, exhibited by senior members of and civilian advisors to the Defence Forces, that caused considerable discontent and a strong reluctance by many of the lower ranks to sign on for additional service. The old feudal system of the mother country was deeply entrenched. Blind obedience in times of war may have been appropriate, but in the late 40's the intelligent young recruits were using their brains and were simply not going to accept 19th century "wisdom". Fortunately sanity has prevailed in more recent times and serving members of the armed forces are now treated with consideration.

## **HMAS WATSON - AND A LITTLE BEYOND.**

As stated in the introduction, the focus on this brief history is on the circumstances related to HMAS Torrens. However, in order to adequately put into context the exit from Torrens, a few words about Watson are appropriate.

Torrens was virtually a few iron and fibro sheds and two brick buildings surrounded by a high fence and situated on flat ground in Birkenhead, an outer and partially industrialised suburb of Adelaide. Watson was a bigger collection of iron and fibro sheds, two brick and several small reinforced concrete buildings surrounded by a high fence to the West and precipitous cliffs to the East in the upper middle class Sydney suburb of Watsons Bay. Whereas the topographies of the two shore establishments were chalk and cheese, the organisation within, the culture and the routine were very similar. Watson perhaps, being under the direct and eagle eye of the Flag Officer, exhibited a bit more spit and polish.

It was at Watson that the RM's began to taste the real world of wireless telegraphy and radar. Watson was fitted out with many, but by no means all models of Naval W/T and radar equipment which the RM's would be called upon to service. One notable exception was the 200 Kw VLF transmitter at HMAS Belconnen near Canberra. This huge installation required a transmitter room twice as big as an average suburban residence and a minimum area the size of 16 Aussie Rule football fields for its aerial array. Simply not possible at highly residential Watsons Bay. It was in this environment that the RM's felt they at last had entered the real Navy. However, it was typically another 4 to 5 months before they would be considered sufficiently competent to be let loose on the fleet as Leading Radio and Radar Mechanics.

At HMAS Watson, Leading Hands had the right to go to the head of the "scran queue". Because Leading Hands in those days were all men of considerable Naval experience regarded by the lesser beings as persons of importance, the newly rated Class 1 of LRM's were apprehensive about exercising this right on the day they were advanced to the Leading Rate. The Senior instructor Lt Cdr Simmons, a psychologist if ever there was one, according to Des Miller, attended the ratings mess at lunch time and in a loud voice insisted that all LRM's come to the head of the queue. From that point on the new breed had no problems in scran queues at Watson.

Mick Cosgrove, who went through life perpetually chuckling and making light of adversity had a motor bike at Watson. He and "Rick" Richards took off on the bike one afternoon with their weekly beer ration which was 6 bottles each. Unfortunately there was an accident when the engine's one and only cylinder decided that enough was enough, and bike, beer and blokes ended up in a mess of broken bottles and bits on the road side. After sorting themselves out the dishevelled and disconsolate pair decided to take the bus back to Watsons Bay. Upon boarding the bus, a rather snooty matron sniifed the air and loudly denounced the state of affairs that allowed drunken sailors who clearly had been fighting to travel on public transport with decent citizens.

When drafted as a new LRM from Watson to Culgoa, Des Miller was put into the mess with Telegraphists, Electricians and other miscellaneous rates. He knew this was incorrect but was apprehensive about asserting his right to be billeted in the PO's mess. He approached his Divisional Officer who then read the appropriate CNO, and on noting an

error had been made took steps to correct it. He told the president of the Chief's and PO's mess that the LRM Miller was to be immediately billeted in that mess. The President was the GI, and he was furious that the Navy had decreed such a sacriligious act. Being a good GI, he complied but for the next 12 months made life for the innocent young LRM miserable on every opportunity he could. Fortunately in the mess was an old timer who was the Buffer, and he softened the Chief GI's venom on many occasions. This Buffer apparently had no right arm rate, had a fierce beard, three GC stripes on his left arm, wore a string of medal ribbons including a GC and LS medal, and had spent practically every month of the war at sea in one ship or another.

Another who suffered the indignities of not being wanted was the author who was drafted as LRM to HMAS Gladstone, flotilla leader training squadron based at Cereberus. His first greeting was from Leading Tel Johnston. *"J--- C---, what the hell do I need a radio mack for?"* His second greeting was from the president of the Chief's and PO's mess, the Chief ERA, *"It took us four years to get our ticket, you got yours in 12 months. Can't be worth much can it!"*

There were some serious moments amid the many happy and humourous times. One such sobering event concerned HMAS Warrnambool which on 13th September 1947 while doing a routine mine sweep, dragged a mine alongside. Upon contact with the ship's hull the mine exploded sinking the ship. Casualties were 2 killed, one drowned and 26 injured. L/RM Bill "Blue" Taylor of 2 Class was one of the survivors.

Another serious event involved PORM Jim Preston of 4 Class. Jim was aboard "Anzac" on 16 November 1952 when she was shelled by a North Korean shore battery. Enemy shells landed within 50 yards but no hits were scored. Anzac, in company with a Canadian and an RN destroyer silenced the shore battery in an engagement that lasted only 20 minutes.

Bill Fulton and "Andy" Anderson had some interesting times aboard the Bay Class Frigate HMAS Murchison in Korean waters. Periodically Murchison was required to steam up the Han River on reconnaissance. At a certain point in the river she would turn and head down stream again. Because the point of turning was too narrow for powered manoeuvres, turning would be effected by the simple expedient of dropping the pick (anchor), and letting the tidal current gently swing the ship around. On occasions Murchison was host to a British or American admiral. The interesting thing is that the only occasions that Murchison was shelled by shore batteries as she turned were those occasions when an admiral was aboard. Clearly the North Korean intelligence capability was high.

There was mild rivalry between Andy who was responsible for the ship's 293, and Bill who had the A276. The 293 out performed the A276 consistently until Bill's wounded pride caused him to effect an unauthorised modification to the preamp in the waveguide. Shortly after a US Fortress ditched at sea, and in the ensuing search, the only contact was made by Bill's modified A276. The four aircrew in the raft probably owed their rescue to Bill's ingenuity.

On another occasion as Murchison was steaming north close to the 38th parallel, an enemy tank open fire from the shore at a range of about 2,000 yards. Shells were landing quite close to Murchison as she opened up with one salvo from her two twin turret 4 inch

guns. In a few seconds the tank had vaporised as the proximity fused shells exploded. As Bill recalls it, it was something of an anticlimax. One second the tank was there hurling explosives at us, and the next it had completely disappeared.

High on the cliff near the northern extremity of Watson's boundaries was a reinforced concrete building known as "The Port War". What this meant no one seemed to really know. In it was housed a communications complex of UHF, VHF, HF and MF receivers and low powered transceivers. Much of the fleet communication was by "arc & spark", ie morse code, and although voice communication was used, it was not at all sophisticated. One such receiver was the DR106 which operated in the frequency range of something like 100 to 140 Megacycles (megahertz had not been invented then). The DR106 was manually tuned and had no crystal lock. Hence getting it on frequency and maintaining it at that frequency required the delicate hand of a brain surgeon. Even line of sight transmission on 139 Mcs of voice on a crystal locked transmitter/receiver like the 86M with an aerial power output of about 5 watts was less reliable than by using a couple of bunting tossers. But of course things improved subsatantially over the years.

As can be noted from the Names list, many RM's had nick names. But RM's were not exclusive to this courtesy. Watson's First Lieutenant in 1947 was a Lt Commander Lewis whose nick name was "Strangler". Mythology had it that Strangler, on occasions of determining punishment appropriate to a sailor charged with some dreadful crime like being escorted aboard by the Naval Shore Patrol, would offer the poor miscreant the choice of three rounds in the boxing ring with him, or take the regulation scale of punishment for the offence.

In those years of 1946 through 1950, The (infamous) Gap was a preferred venue for suicides. Being adjacent to The Gap, Watson occupants always had a grandstand panoramic view of rescue and recovery proceedings in these poor unfortunate cases.

On a lighter note, Sydney was a magic place to the young innocents who had come from outback places like Kilcoy in Queensland, Bunbury in Western Australia and Melbourne in Victoria. It was really sophistication to spend an evening "up the Cross", in the Hasty Tasty or at Ziggies. At the top of the Wynyard ramp leading on to George Street there used to be a mobile hot dog stand which was operated by a humourless but energetic man from late at night until around 4 am. A really great night ashore would be blissfully concluded by eating one of his delicacies, dripping with hot mustard or tomato sauce while walking down George Street to turn left up Grosvenor Street to spend the night at "Johnnies".

Beds in the dormitories at Johnnies were assigned on the basis of what time in the morning you wanted to be "given a shake". One dormitory would have a wake time of 5.00am, the next at 5.15, the next at 5.30 and so on. The challenge then was to rise, shower, shave, struggle into a tight uniform, throw down some eggs and sausages, and somehow get to Eddy Avenue at Central in time to catch one of the ancient double decker buses which would be scheduled to arrive at Watsons Bay by 0750. Then a fast run up the hill to be aboard before colours at 0800. The rest of the day would be spent dreaming about and bragging about the previous night's excesses. The rest of the week would be spent on board because all the meagre fortnight's pay had been spent that night.

Whoever conceived, implemented, managed and perpetuated Johnnies in those years will forever be saints. The place was a haven for sailors ashore at night. It was well run, cheap, and good quality. The beds were always clean. The showers had thousands of gallons of continuous hot water. The cafeteria always had plenty of low cost well cooked simple meals. Although discipline such as we knew it in the service did not exist in Johnnies, hanky panky of any type was not tolerated and was swiftly stamped on when it occasionally reared its ugly head. Perhaps in the 1990's it would be regarded as an anachronism, a little tarnished, and not the "best" place to frequent. To all of us sailors in those immediate post war years of shortages and opportunism, it was one stop short of heaven.

Another preferred eatery for sailors returning late at night from shore leave was Harry's Cafe de Wheels, located just outside the gates of Garden Island Dockyard. Harry's has changed hands over the years (the original proprietor would probably be 100 if he were alive in 1992) and its atmosphere has changed with the times. Had to in order to remain a viable business. Harry dispensed high quality hot take away food for many years before the term "take away" was invented. Nutrition may have been an alien term to him, but he understood the meaning of a satisfied and full belly.

# ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY

IN REPLY PLEASE QUOTE

NO.

Naval Recruiting Office,  
Forrest Place,  
PERTH. W.A.

23rd February, 1946.

J. Preston,  
Knowles Street,  
HARVEY.

Further to our telegram of the 22nd February, 1946, you are requested to report to this Office at 9-0 a.m. on Friday the 1st, March, 1946 for interview and final medical examination. If selected and passed medically fit you will be mobilised and despatched to Flinders Naval Depot on Tuesday the 5th March, 1946.

It will be necessary for you to surrender your Ration Books and Identity Card on mobilisation.

Rail Warrant covering journey to Perth is enclosed herewith under Registered Cover.

*[Signature]*  
Lieutenant RAIVR.  
NAVAL RECRUITING OFFICER, W.A.

AB. 250/X. *WA*  
H.M.A.S. "CERBERUS"  
*PRESTON*  
Name *James* Rating *Ord R.M.*  
Watch *1st Port* Mess *59*  
S.B. No. *P 094* Religion *PC*  
Medical Officer *6.3.46* A/G.S. *8.4.46*  
Dental Officer *10.3.46* Clothing Officer  
0.20M/45. *31.05.46*

A.S. 247. (Adopted 1934)  
H.M.A.S. "TORRENS"  
H.M.A.S.  
Name *PRESTON* *J.* PART  
Division *SMN* Mess  
Rating *9/6 R.M.* Religion  
00,000-02109/1/44-SL 5227-(19) *12*

## PHOTOGRAPHS

The following pages have reproductions of some of the many photographs lent to me. The challenge was for me to select a few from the hundreds received, such that what is published here is representative of our time as young RM's. I have chosen to present these photos in this manner, because to reproduce with the usual few words of captions would not do justice to them. My book publisher recommended I write captions for each photo, but I have not taken this good and professional advice.

1. This was the main gate at FND, and our first real introduction to the Navy. Magical, exciting, soaked in tradition, historical were thoughts that went through our minds as we passed these historic gates. Photo courtesy Doug Hawke.

2. The parade ground with drill hall as the main building featured. Sadly this building is no more. It had to be demolished before it literally collapsed. The clock tower has been preserved however. The parade ground was an asphalt rectangle in front of the building. For reasons we did not understand, sailors NEVER walked across this piece of hallowed territory - they doubled (ie ran smartly in a seaman like manner) across. Photo courtesy Doug Hawke.

3. The Bull Ring. This unsealed plot of ground was tortured every working day of the week by heavy booted recruits. Every new entry sailor regardless of his calling spent weeks marching; counter marching; dressing by the right, left and centre; taking off his cap the correct way; standing stiffly to attention; saluting properly and so on. An amateur statistician once estimated that the surface level of the Bull Ring was lowered by an inch each week as recruits carried off the soil in their boots, hair, trousers and even underpants. Photo courtesy Bill Reed.

4. Kit inspection. Every item of clothing had to be laid out for inspection at regular intervals. Each item had to be folded or rolled such that the owner's name was clearly displayed. There was one correct sequence for laying out the items, and probably 1000 incorrect ways. Those who did not lay out their clothing in the correct manner were punished by having to do extra duties. Above the sailors' heads to the right of the photo can just be seen the steel bars from which hammocks were slung at night. Behind the sailors to the left of the photo can be seen the tiny box like lockers into which all clothing, clean and soiled including boots had to be stowed. Photo courtesy Doug Hawke

5. Penelope. This was the name of the accommodation block at Torrens in Port Adelaide. Compared with "J" Block at Cerberus where we had spent our 6 weeks introduction into the Navy, this was pure heaven. There was space to move, space to stow our gear in decent sized lockers, bunks to sleep in, a recreation room of our own, and well appointed heads (bathrooms and toilets). During the war Penelope was constructed as the accommodation block for the WRANS, who were thought by the naive architects to be delicate creatures deserving of the best type of accommodation possible. Our good luck. Photo courtesy John Humphrey.

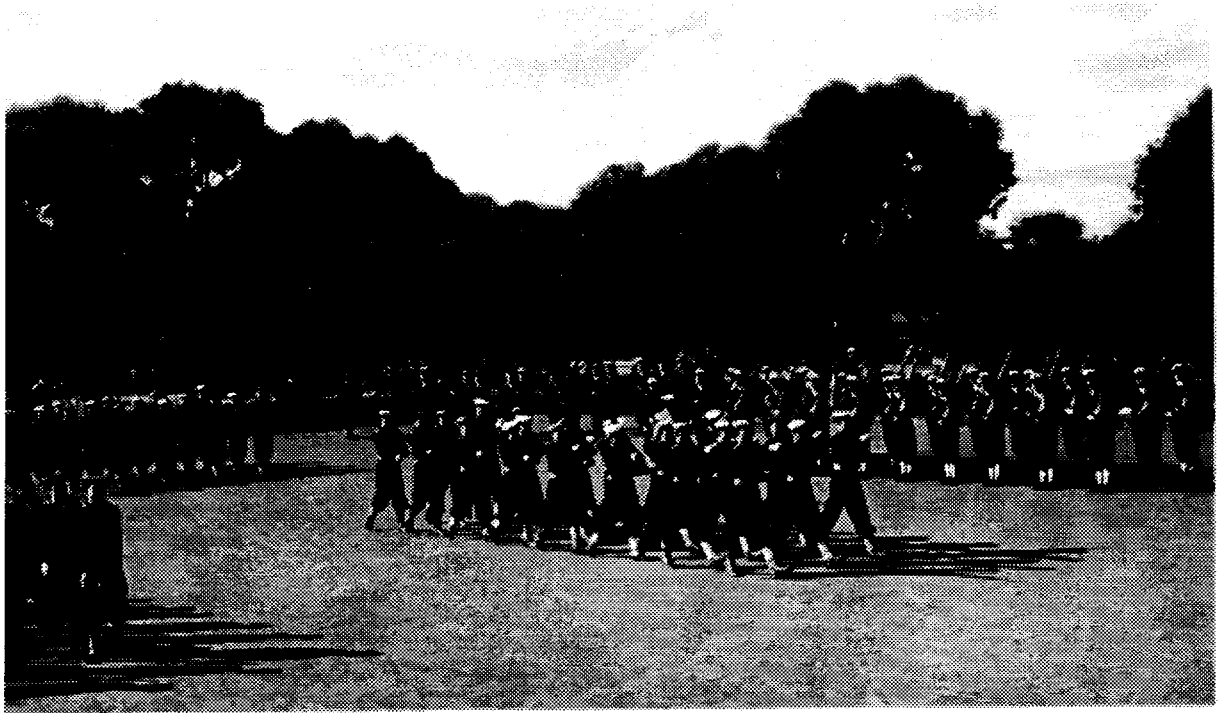


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6. One of Penelope's dormitories. Note the hammock slinging bars which were never used by us for such purpose, nor we believe by the previous occupants, the WRANS. Photo courtesy Jim Preston.

7. This is a view taken from the flag tower at Torrens. Bottom right is Penelope. The bodies sitting are outside the bathrooms and heads. Fortunately Port Adelaide has mild winters. Behind Penelope can be seen the galley and mess hall. Beyond that in the far right background is the brick building which was the Administration block. To the left of the admin block in the middle of the photo is the officers and PO's quarters. On the far left background is the drill hall. Between Penelope and the drill hall is the depot recreation room. In the distant background are some of the buildings outside of the Torrens perimeter.

8. The Parkside Hotel, otherwise known as the Torrens Rugby teams gymnasium. Photo courtesy Bill Robertson.

9. Glanville railway station. In the early days, transport from Torrens to the School of Mines was shanks pony and steam train from Glanville station to Adelaide Central, and return. This well disciplined lot is Class #6. Photo courtesy June Earle.

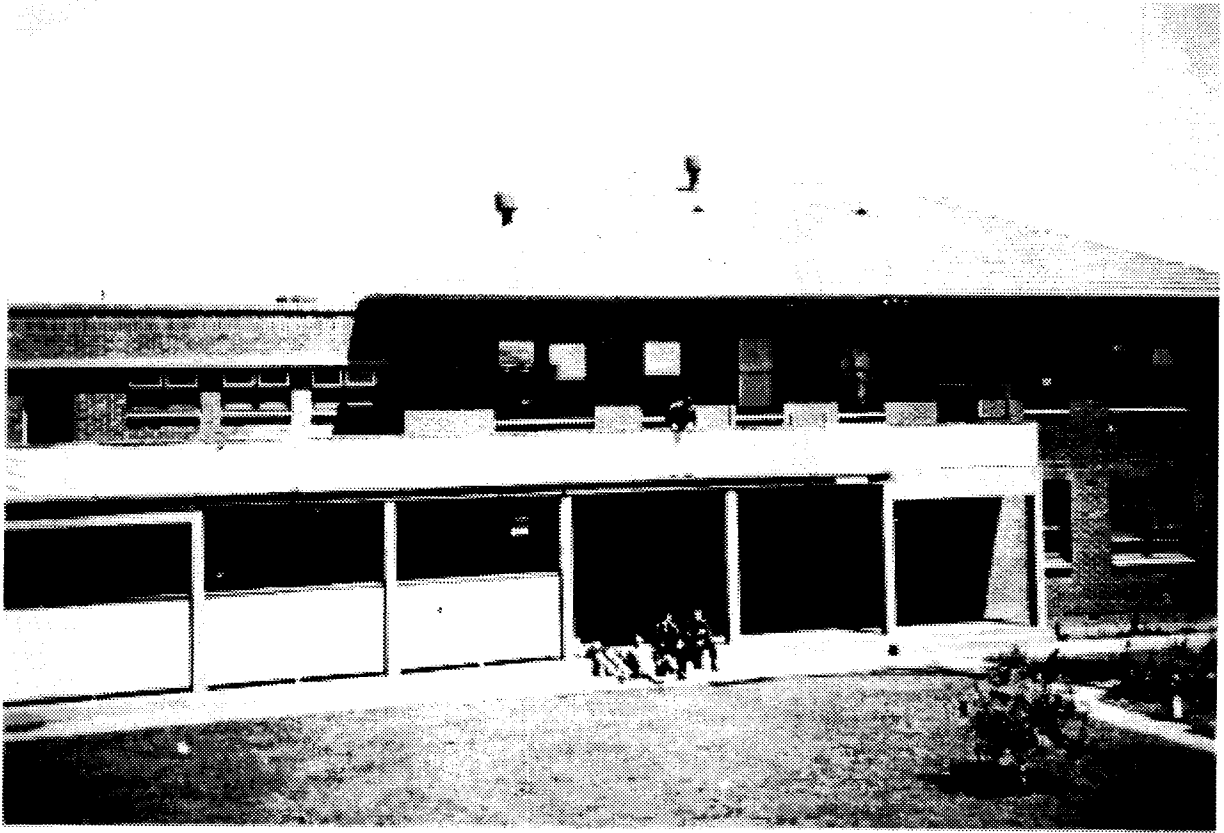
10. Upon arrival at Adelaide Central, classes were "fell in", and marched along North Terrace to the School of Mines in Frome Road. In the immediate post war years, one could wander at will, blindfolded in many of Adelaide's main thoroughfares with impunity, the only hazards being the possibility of stumbling over a kerbside gutter or being barked at by a curious dog. This is 7 class. Photo courtesy Ron Jones.

11. Having reached the School of Mines after the excitement of travel from Torrens, RM's were treated to a program of lectures and laboratory activities. This photo is of class 11. Left to right back row Norm Wilson, Keverne Tulk. Third row Frank Fowler, Kevin Ruthven, Stan Hubbard. Second row Victor Buck-Pitt, Colin MacNish, Ray Brown. Front row John Duncan, Jim Collins, Ray Whybin, Bill Grant. Instructor is Don Crowley. Photo courtesy Bill Grant & Colin MacNish.

12. THE SUPERHETRODYNE RECEIVER. This is printed in upper case lettering to illustrate its importance because understanding how the superhet was constructed and worked was central to our whole being. If you knew the workings of a superhet, stardom was yours. Few of us really understood this (now) very simple device, but most of us managed to hoodwink our examiners. Photo courtesy June Earle.

13. These are not 3 Samsons. They are L to R Gil Harrington, Brian Robertson and Doug Hawke taken at the portals of the School of Mines in November 1946.

14. and 15. These were professionally taken photographs by the Adelaide "Advertiser" as part of the publicity program to attract suitably qualified recruits into the Radio Mechanics branch in the latter part of 1946. L to R in photo #14 taken 4th June 1946 are Deirn Geard, Jack Mannix, Les Green, Les Bail and Ron McCarthy. L to R in photo #15 are Les Bail and Jack Mannix. Photos courtesy Margaret Bail.



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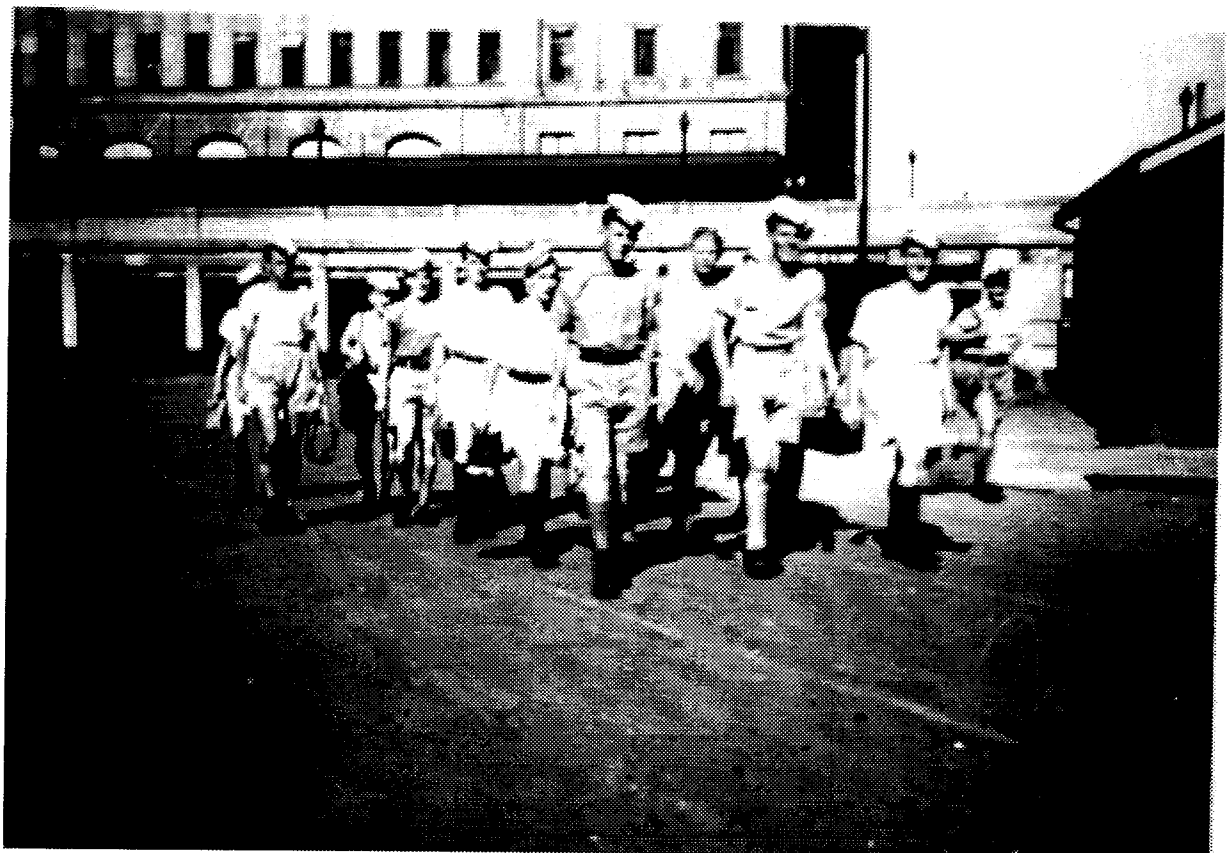
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